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RED-TAILED HAWK "CAPTURED" BY A STRIPED WHIP SNAKE

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During the last 50 yrs, there have been many reports of birds being preyed upon by snakes (Wythe 1933; Austin et al. 1972; Blem 1979). Most reports are of moderate to large snakes preying upon small birds (Ervin and Rose 1973), nestlings (Jackson 1970; Cink 1977) or eggs (Best 1974; 1977), or occasional reports of birds as large as California Quail (*Callipepla californica*) killed by "rattlesnakes" (Jewett 1939) and "gopher snakes" (Wythe 1933). Fendley (1980) reported a rat snake consumed several Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) eggs in a nest box which also contained a dead female merganser. Whitfield (1934) observed a gopher snake capture a roosting Western Screech Owl (*Otus kennicottii*). However, we could not find a reference of a snake as small as a Desert Whip Snake (*Masticophis t. taeniatus*) capturing a bird as large as an adult Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*).

On 15 August 1984 a near-dead Red-tailed Hawk was reported to officials at Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge in western Utah. The hawk was found encoiled by a desert striped whip snake ca. 1 m in length. The snake was wrapped twice around the hawk's body underneath its wings, and once completely around the hawk's neck rendering it completely incapacitated. After removing the snake from the bird, a careful examination revealed that the hawk had no serious injuries, other than appearing to be in shock. The bird was released at the refuge and after a recovery period of 35 min flew away.

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